

March 5, 2019

Testimony in support of HB-7257

Greetings to our esteemed co-chairs Haddad and Haskell, ranking members Hall and Hwang, and vice-chairs Turco and Flexer, and the entire committee.

I am here today to express support for HB-7257. This is a critical time to be making changes to how colleges and universities address the basic needs of the student population. The Campus Compact of Southern New England (and Campus Compacts across the country) recognize the research published by [Sarah Goldrick-Rab](#) as the universal standard regarding food and housing insecurity on college campuses.

Her research indicates that at least 40 percent of college students face food insecurity at least once before they graduate. Supporting research indicates community college rates of food insecurity as high as 60 percent. My experience as a community college student bears this out solidly.

My current project is the Manchester Community College Cougar [Pantry](#) where we host up to 200 to 300 visits daily. Our model is unique in Connecticut, in that, the Cougar Pantry is an open door, open shopping experience. Knowing that the United Way identifies 40 percent of Connecticut households have income insufficient to meet all basic needs, it is safe to assume that college students would almost uniformly fit in to the [ALICE](#) category.

Our Cougar Pantry reinforces the published and nationally accepted research by Sarah Goldrick-Rab. We currently distribute as much as 5000 pounds of quality, wholesome food to our MCC population (employees use it also). This amount of food is distributed for less than a thousand dollars a month. Anecdotally, I can testify that this minor investment is retaining hundreds of students and adding to the quality of life for both students and employees.

I would encourage this body, the Board of Regents, the entire CSU, and the Campus Compact of Southern New England, to embrace the Cougar Pantry model system-wide.

Gordon Plouffe